

Grass Eggar *Lasiocampa trifolii* (D. & S.) (Lep.: Lasiocampidae) intersex female

Nostalgia is a powerful emotion, so I was delighted when Graham Jones sent me a few eggs from a female Grass Eggar *Lasiocampa trifolii* trapped on 10.viii.2001 at one of my boyhood hunting grounds, the Formby sandhills in Lancashire.

I reared the resulting caterpillars with some difficulty. A full account is given in *Lancashire Moths newsletter* 7: 4-6. Five moths were bred, but one of the three females was an intersex. This was most noticeable in the antennae. The right antenna was bipectinated almost as strongly as in a male, while the left antenna was structurally intermediate between the sexes. The moth otherwise resembled a female, and indeed produced an egg. The specimen is now deposited in the collection of Mark Young.

Ford, E. B., (1955) *The New Naturalist: Moths* mentions intersex females in this species resulting from crosses between the Kent subspecies *flava* and typical form from Devon, due to genetic incompatibility between these races. Clearly this was not the cause here. Although too much importance should not be given to a single instance of this developmental abnormality, further examples might suggest that the isolated Formby population is suffering from inbreeding.

I am grateful to Graham Jones for sending me the eggs.— ROY LEVERTON, Whitewells, Ordiquhill, Cornhill, Banffshire AB45 2HS.

Migrant moths recorded on the Isle of Wight during February 2004

This year, 2004, saw the best February on record for immigrant Lepidoptera. Early in the month moderate South-westerly winds caused the first wave of migrant butterflies and moths. On 3 February a Painted Lady *Cynthia cardui* (L.) was seen on Headon Warren and St. Helens. Many more were reported up to the middle of the month. A record temperature of 18°C was recorded at Gravesend on 4th. On 5 and 6 February several Small Mottled Willow *Spodoptera exigua* (Hb.), Dark Sword-grass *Agrotis ipsilon* (Hufn.) and Rush Veneer *Nomophila noctuella* (D. & S.) were recorded at Freshwater, Totland and Binstead.

On 10 February the winds dropped and a very gentle breeze from the south & south-west caused the second more notable wave of migrants which ended on 14 February. I recorded The Ni Moth *Trichoplusia ni* (Hb.), three Bordered Straw *Heliothis peltigera*, (D. & S.), *Spodoptera exigua*, two *Nomophila noctuella* and one Diamond-backed Moth *Plutella xylostella* (L.) at Totland on 10 February, with *Euchromius ocella* (Haw.) on 11 February and two Scarce Bordered Straw *Helicoverpa armigera* (Hb.) on 12th. A female Red-headed Chestnut *Conistra erythrocephala* (D.& S.) was taken by James Halsey at Bonchurch and a single male Cosmopolitan *Mythimna loreyi* (Dup.) was noted by Dave Wooldridge at Freshwater on 13 February. *Spodoptera exigua* (Hb.) *Heliothis peltigera*, *Agrotis ipsilon* and *Nomophila noctuella* were also recorded in numbers at Freshwater, Binstead and

Bonchurch. A single Silver Y *Autographa gamma* (L.) was observed at Freshwater during the day on 18 February, after which colder weather set in and the migration finished. Dry cold weather with northerly winds and night frosts were a feature of the second half of the month and on the evening of 26 February about an inch (2.5 cms) of snow fell on the Island.

There were about a dozen records of the very rare immigrant Levant Blackneck *Tathorhyuchus exsiccata* (Lederer) from Puddleton and Portland, Dorset from 11 to 13 February. Other migrants not mentioned so far which were recorded from Southern England were Udea ferrugalis (Hb.), the Vestal *Rhodometra sacraria* (Linn.), the Gem *Orthonana obstipata* (Fabr.), Striped Hawk-moth *Hyles livornica* (Esper), Pearly Underwing *Peridroma saucia* (Hb.), Nutmeg *Discestra trifolii* (Hufn.) and White-speck *Mythimna uipiuucta* (Haw.).— SAM KNILL-JONES, 1 Moorside, MoonsHill, Totland, Isle of Wight P039 OHU.

Searches for the Bordered Gothic *Heliophobus reticulata* around Peterborough, 2001-2003

The Bordered Gothic is a moth that has recently declined to the point of virtual extinction in Great Britain (see Waring, 2002. *Atropos* **16**: 76-77, Dudley, 2003. *Atropos* **20**: 59 and Waring, Townsend & Lewington, 2003. *Field guide to the moths of Great Britain and Ireland*. British Wildlife Publishing). Up to the 1970s it was recorded from a wide scatter of sites in southern and eastern England, but after 1980 it was seldom reported away from Dorset and East Anglia (Waring, 2002. *Atropos* **16**: 76-77). It used to be found in the vicinity of Peterborough. For example it is on the moth list in Cook & Pilcher (1982. *The history of Borough Fen Decoy*. Providence, Ely) for the Borough Fen Duck Decoy (O.S. grid reference TF 200080) just 6 km north-east of Werrington, where I live. The larval foodplant and other ecological requirements of the moth are poorly understood, but most former localities are hot dry, open, well-drained sites, such as the breckland of East Anglia and the Isle of Portland, Dorset. Soapwort *Saponaria officinalis* appears to be the only reported foodplant, after which the moth was once named by Borkhausen (*saponariae* Borkhausen, 1792). I personally doubt the species feeds exclusively on Soapwort but Julian Clarke (pers. comm.) has said that a captive female he once had would only lay eggs on this plant, of those offered. Soapwort is large and conspicuous when in flower. It favours open, sunny places with thin soil. I saw it growing widely in southern France in August 2003, but around Peterborough I only know of one wild population, along a stretch of about 50m of grassy roadside verge near Helpston (TF 113027 to TF 113028), and two colonies of the double-flowered form which is a garden escape. I could not find any of the plant at Borough Fen Duck Decoy when I visited on 25 May 2002 but I must return in August when the plant is in flower and much more obvious before I can say there is none there. My impression of the Decoy is that it is now heavily overgrown with woody plants and that there are no really open, hot sites there. According to Cook and Pilcher (1982. *The history of Borough*